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Testimony by:  
Rep. Henry Genga  
On

HB 6007: An Act Concerning "Blue Alerts"

February 7, 2013

Distinguished Chairs Representative Dargan and Senator Hartley, Ranking Members Representative Giegler and Senator Guglielmo, and Members of the Public Safety Committee; I am State Representative Henry Genga here to testify in support of HB 6007, "An Act Concerning Blue Alerts."

Blue Alerts are similar to AMBER Alerts but with a different purpose. Blue Alerts are used to alert the public when a law enforcement officer has been killed, injured or missing and law enforcement agencies are searching for a suspect who is considered an imminent threat. Blue Alerts inform the public of possible danger and are used to solicit public assistance.

I have been contacted by an East Hartford Police Officer who believes this is an effective tool to be used for the safety of the public.

There are 15 states that have passed some form of Blue Alert legislator. The model I am recommending is similar to the state of Washington.

See OLR Research Report: "Blue Alerts 2012"

1. a law enforcement officer has been killed, injured severely, or assaulted with a deadly weapon with the suspect fleeing the crime scene;

2. a law enforcement agency determines the suspect poses an imminent threat; and
3. there is sufficient information available to broadcast to the public for assistance in apprehending the suspect (i.e., description of the suspect's vehicle or license plate number).

Washington recently passed legislation to implement Blue Alerts (2012 Wash. Sess. Laws ch. 37). This law requires law enforcement agencies to implement a Blue Alert system that is consistent with various state laws, including the state's AMBER alert system, Missing Person Clearinghouse, and Endangered Missing Person Advisory Plan.

Under Washington law, law enforcement officers include police officers, the Attorney General and his or her deputies, sheriffs and their regular deputies, correction officers, state and local fire marshals, state Fish and Wildlife agents, and federal law enforcement officers.

The Blue Alert law requires the law enforcement agency with primary jurisdiction over the crime scene to activate the alert system and notify the appropriate participants when the activation criteria are met.

The Blue Alert must include all appropriate information that may help in the suspect's apprehension, including a statement instructing any person with information relating to the incident to contact the agency. The agency must assess the appropriateness of the Blue Alert based on the nature of the suspect and the circumstances of the crime. This means the Blue Alert may be issued in a smaller area than the entire state if it is probable the suspect did not leave a designated geographic area.

The agency must terminate the Blue Alert when it determines the system is no longer an effective tool for locating and apprehending the suspect. The agency must notify other law enforcement agencies, the National Crime Information Center, and the media when it terminates the alert.

The legislation allows agencies to issue regulations to implement the program. This includes procedures to support the investigating law enforcement agency in the:

1. receipt, analysis, and dissemination of information about the suspect and the suspect's location or methods of escape;
2. process for reporting information to media outlets; and
3. procedures for the investigating agency to determine quickly whether an officer has been seriously injured or killed and a Blue Alert must be activated.

Thank you for your time and consideration.